

TOM TAMES HIS WIFE'S MOTHER-IN-LAW—THE DELICATESSEN SHOP TO THE RESCUE

BY JANE WHITAKER

Alice had never met her mother-in-law, who had been visiting a daughter in a distant city when Tom and Alice eloped, therefore she did not recognize the tiny, alert little woman, with snow white hair and bright brown eyes, who stood in the doorway.

"I'm Tom's mother," the little lady announced. "I haven't seen Tom since he was married, so I have come for a visit. I suppose you are his wife?"

Alice nodded, the while her heart sank at the remembrance of dishes for three days piled on the kitchen table, in the sink and every other available spot, the beds not made, and the whole house unclean.

However, she was as cordial as she could be under the circumstances.

The little lady took possession at once. "My, what a lot of work you have," she said, in a cheerful voice. "Did you have company for breakfast?"

"No," Alice replied, without thinking. "There was just Tom and myself."

"And you dirtied all those dishes! You careless children."

Alice explained. "Tom has been having a little holiday, and I wanted to give him every minute of my time, so we have been just jaunting around, letting the work slide."

The little lady looked amazed. "Do you mean you haven't washed your dishes? No wonder you are over-run with flies. If you want to hold your husband, you must be more tidy."

Alice said nothing, though the tears sprang readily to her eyes, as she led the little lady to the guest chamber, for Alice had all the fear of a mother-in-law that is in the heart of every bride.

The guest room was dusty, and the little lady flicked some of the dirt aside with her clean handkerchief.

"We will have to get right down to cleaning," she observed. "I could never sleep in such a dusty room. It's unhealthy."

When they reached the kitchen and Alice had attacked the stack of dishes she suggested timidly that perhaps the little lady would like to dry them.

"I'll try, but my hands are so nervous that I dread handling dishes,"

and at that moment she dropped one of Alice's hand-painted plates, a wedding gift.

"You see," the little lady apologized. "I am too shaky to do anything."

The dishes finished, Alice swept the kitchen floor, and then the little lady discovered a spot on the linoleum made by splashing grease.

"Isn't that too bad," she said. "You will have to scrub the whole floor now. You ought to have an extra strip there."

Alice had never scrubbed a floor—she had not had to at home and Tom had insisted she should have a woman once a week to do such work, but Alice could not explain this to Tom's mother and show her incompetence, so she got down on her knees and went to work.

When she was through she was very tired. "I guess we better have some lunch," she suggested.

"My dear, you can't waste time on lunch. You've got the whole upstairs to clean this afternoon. Isn't there some cold meat or something?"

"There's a little roast beef in the icebox."

"Well, you put the kettle on and I'll stay here until it boils and I'll make a couple of sandwiches while you start upstairs. I'll call you when the tea is ready."

Alice did not think of rebelling.